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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS.

ANECDOTES OF TURLOUGH CAROLAN.

THIS celebrated poet and musician, was born in the year 1670, in the village of Nobber, in the county of Westmeath, on the lands of Carolan's-town, which were wrested from his ancestors by the family of the Nugents, on their arrival in this kingdom.* His father was a poor farmer, the humble proprietor of a few acres, which yielded him a scanty subsistence. Of his mother nothing is known. The cabin in which our bard was born is still pointed out to the inquisitive traveller. As it is in a ruinous state, it must soon become a prey to all-devouring time; yet the spot on which it stands may perhaps be visited at a future day with as much true devotion, by the lovers of national music, as are Stratford and Benfield by the admirers of Shakespeare and Pope.

The small-pox deprived him of his eye-sight, at so early a period of his life, that he retained no recollection of colours. Thus was "knowledge at one entrance quite shut out," before he had taken even a cursory view of the creation. From this misfortune he felt no uneasiness; "My eyes," he used to say, "are transplanted to my ears."

His musical talents were soon discovered, and his friends determined to cultivate them. About the age of twelve, a proper master was engaged to instruct him in the practice of the harp; but though fond of that instrument, he never struck it with a master hand. Genius and diligence are seldom united; and it is practice alone which can perfect us in any art. Yet his harp was rarely unstrung: but in general he used it only to assist him in composition; his fingers wandered through the strings in quest of melody.

When young Carolan became enamoured of Miss Bridget Cruise, of Cruisetown, in the county of Longford, his harp now, like the lute of Anacreon, would sound only of love. Though

this lady did not give him her hand, yet it is supposed she did not deny him her heart; or, perhaps, as one of his brothers says,

"Like Phœbus thus acquiring unsought
praise,
He snatched at love, and filled his arms
with bays."

The song which bears her name is his masterpiece: it came warm from his heart, while his genius was in full vigour. A very extraordinary instance of the effect of Carolan's passion for this lady, is related by Mr. O'Connor: He went once on a pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory, a cave in an island in Lough Dearg, in the county of Donegall. On his return to shore he met several pilgrims waiting the arrival of the boat that had conveyed him. In assisting some of these devout travellers to get on board, he chanced to take a lady's hand, and instantly exclaimed, "By the head of my gossip, this is the hand of Bridget Cruise." His sense of feeling had not deceived him: it was the hand of her whom he had once adored. "I had the narrative from his own mouth," says the person by whom this anecdote is recorded, "and in terms which gave me a strong impression of the emotions which he felt on meeting the object of his early affections. Carolan at this time was about the middle of his earthly career."

Our bard solaced himself for the loss of Miss Cruise, in the arms of Mary M'Guire, a young lady of good family in the county of Fermanagh. Miss M'Guire proved a proud and extravagant dame; but she was the wife of his choice; he loved her tenderly, and lived harmoniously with her. It is probable that on his marriage he fixed his residence on a small farm near Moshill, in the county of Leitrim. Here he built a neat little house, where he gave every friend a kind and hearty welcome. Hospitality consumed the produce of his little farm; he ate, drank, and was merry, and inadvertently left to-morrow to provide for itself. This sometimes occasioned embarrassments in his domestic affairs, but he had no friend to remind him,

* It is said that thirty acres of these lands were given to our bard by the father of Earl Nugent, the present proprietor.

that nothing can supply the want of prudence, and that negligence and irregularity, long continued, will make knowledge and wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible.

At what period of his life Carolan became an itinerant musician is not known; nor is it confidently told whether he was urged to this change in his manner of living, by want, or induced to it by his fondness for music: by some of his biographers it has been imputed to an early disappointment in love. However this may be, he continued during the remainder of his life to travel through the country in this character, mounted on a good horse, attended by a domestic on another, who carried his harp. Wherever he went, the gates of the nobility and gentry were thrown open to him; he was received with respect, and a distinguished place assigned him at the table.

On his return from one of those excursions, he was asked by one of his friends, whether he had visited Colonel Archdall? "No," replied the bard, emphatically, "but I visited a prince;" thus intimating the hospitable reception this gentleman had given him.

But he had not more reason to extol the hospitality of Colonel Archdall, than that of Mr. Jones, of Moneyglass, in the county of Antrim: nor was he deficient in gratitude for the civilities he received during his stay in that mansion: he has enshrined his hospitable character in one of his best planxties. Of this, the air alone is now to be had, the words are forgotten since the well-known English version, written by Mr. Arthur Dawson, which may be looked upon as one of the best convivial drinking songs extant, and is also admirably adapted to the original air of Carolan. It is in every body's hands, and therefore needless to be quoted here.

It was during his periprinations, that Carolan composed all those airs which are still the delight of his countrymen. He thought the tribute of a song due to every house in which he was entertained, and he never failed to pay it, choosing for his subject either the head of the family, or the loveliest of its branches.

The subject of one of his favourite

and most admired compositions, was the sister of a Mr. Nugent. She lived with one of her sisters, near Belanagor, in the county of Roscommon, at the time when she inspired the bard, and he endeavoured to do justice to her merits in the song now well known by the name of Gracey Nugent.

The following incident gave birth to the piece called Carolan's Devotion:—A Miss Fetherston, of the county of Longford, on her way to church, in Granard, one Sunday, accidentally met with the bard, when the following conversation, as related by a friend of both parties, took place:—

Miss F. Your servant, Mr. Carolan.

Carolan. I thank you—who speaks to me?

Miss F. It is I, sir, one Miss Fetherston.

Carolan. I have heard of you, madam: a young lady of great beauty, and much wit. The loss of one sense prevents my beholding your beauty; and I believe it is a happy circumstance for me, for it has made many captives. But your wit, madam, I dread it.

Miss F. Had I wit, Mr. Carolan, this is not a day for displaying any; it should give place to the duty of prayer. I apprehend, that in complying with this duty, you go one way, and I another. I wish I could prevail with you to quit your way for mine.

Carolan. Should I go your way, madam, I dread you yourself would be the chief object of my devotion.

Miss F. And what if I should go your way, Carolan?

Carolan. I have already declared the sense of my danger in being near you. I well know that the power which some men have of making females converts to their religion can have no effect in regard to you, madam. Your own inherent powers would conquer every thing. In a church or in a mass-house you would draw all devotion to yourself; and so, madam, in my own defence, I must now take my flight.

Miss F. Hold, Carolan, we must not quit so abruptly. As I have been long charmed with your compositions in music, I could wish to see you in our house, and that your visit would be as speedy as possible.

Carolan. Could you, madam, sus-

pend the music of your wit, I should obey your commands cheerfully.

Miss F. Away with your mockery of wit and danger. In listening to your notes, the danger will be on my side. Come speedily however.

Carolan. To please you, madam, is the utmost I can expect; and on the terms I proposed, I will wait on you.

Miss F. You will assuredly be welcome—but pray for me where you are going.

Carolan. Could I withdraw my devotion from yourself, I would obey, but I will make the best effort I can. Adieu.

The event justified his fears. Instead of praying for Miss Fetherston, he neglected his religious duties to compose a song on her. In it he complains, with more gallantry than piety, that the mass is no longer his devotion, but that now his devotion is she. The air of this song is reckoned among one of the best of his musical compositions.

It is remarkable, that Carolan, in his gayest mood, and even when his genius was most inspired by the flowing bowl, never could compose a planxty for a Miss Brett, in the county of Sligo, whose father's house he frequented, and where he always met with a reception due to his taste and endowments. One day, after an unsuccessful attempt to compose something in a sprightly strain for this lady, he threw aside his harp, in a mixture of rage and grief, and addressing himself in Irish to her mother, "Madam," said he, "I have often, from my great respect to your family, attempted a planxty, in order to celebrate your daughter's perfections, but to no purpose. Some evil genius hovers over me; there is not a string in my harp that does not vibrate a melancholy sound, when I set about this task. I fear she is not doomed to remain long among us; nay," added he, emphatically, "she will not survive twelve months." The event verified his melancholy prediction. The truth of this anecdote has been attested by several of the family.

From a neglect in his education, Carolan, at an early period of his life, contracted a fondness for spirituous liquors, which never after forsook him. But inordinate gratifications carry their punishment with them; nor was Caro-

lan exempt from this general imposition. His physicians assured him, that unless he corrected this habit, a scurvy, which was the consequence of his intemperance, would soon put an end to his mortal career. He obeyed, though with reluctance, and seriously resolved upon never again tasting the forbidden cup. The town of Boyle, in the county of Roscommon, was at that time his principal place of residence. There, while under this severe regimen, he walked, or rather wandered about; his usual gaiety forsook him; no sallies of a lively imagination broke out; every moment was marked with a dejection of spirits, bordering on the deepest melancholy, and his favourite harp lay in an obscure corner of his habitation, neglected and unstrung. Passing by a grocer's shop in the town, after a six week's quarantine, he was tempted to step in, undetermined whether to yield to the impulse of the moment, or to adhere to his late resolution. "Well, my dear friend," said he to the young man who stood behind the counter, "You see I am a man of constancy; for six long weeks I have refrained from whiskey; was there ever so great an instance of self-denial?—But a thought strikes me—you will surely not refuse me the favour I am about to solicit. Bring me a measure of my favourite liquor, that I may smell it, and I assure you I will not put in within my lips." The lad complied with his request, and no sooner did the fumes ascend into his brain, than every latent spark within him was re-kindled: his countenance glowed with unusual brightness, and he poured forth the effusions of a heart newly animated, in wild, but poetic expressions over the bowl to which he owed his inspiration. At length, to the great peril of his health, and contrary to the advice of his medical friends, he once more drank the prohibited beverage, renewing the draught, until his spirits had fully resumed their former tone. He immediately set about composing that much-admired song which goes by the name of Carolan's Receipt. For sprightliness of sentiment, and harmony of numbers, it stands unrivalled in the list of our best drinking songs. He commenced the words, and began to modulate the air, in the evening, at

Boyle, and before the following morning he sung and played this noble offspring of his imagination in Mr. Stafford's parlour at Elphin.

Yet, notwithstanding his inordinate passion for spirituous liquors, it is but justice to mention, that he seldom drank to excess; besides, he seemed to think that the spirit of whiskey assisted him in his musical compositions, and therefore, in his latter days, he never composed without having a bottle of it beside him.

To deny Carolan his favourite beverage, was a certain method of rousing his satire. Residing for some time in the house of a parsimonious lady, he happened one day, as he sat playing on his harp, to hear the Butler unlock the cellar door: instantly he arose, and following the man, requested a cup of beer; but the fellow thrust him rudely out of the cellar, declaring he would give him nothing but by his mistress's order. In a rage the insulted bard composed the following epigram:

"What a pity hell's gates are not kept
by O'Flinn,

"So surly a dog would let no body in."

The fame of Carolan, as a musician, having reached the ears of an eminent Italian music-master in Dublin, he put his abilities to a severe test, the result of which convinced him how well-founded had been whatever was said in his favour. The method he made use of was as follows: he singled out an excellent piece of music, in the Italian style; but here and there he either altered or mutilated the piece, in such a manner, however, that no one but a real judge could detect the alterations. Carolan bestowed the deepest attention on the performer while he was playing it, not knowing that it was intended as a trial of his skill, and that the critical moment was at hand which was to determine his reputation for ever. He declared it to be an excellent piece of music; but, to the astonishment of all present, said, very humbly, in his own language, "*Tu se air chois air bucaighe*;" that is, "Here and there it limps and stumbles." He was requested to rectify the errors, which he accordingly did. In this state the piece was sent from Connaught to Dublin; and the Italian

no sooner saw the amendment, than he pronounced Carolan to be a true musical genius.

Another anecdote of the same kind is also recorded of him. In the beginning of the last century, Lord Mayo brought from Dublin a celebrated Italian performer, to spend some time with him at his seat in the country. Carolan, who at that time was on a visit at his lordship's, found himself greatly neglected, and complained of it one day in the presence of the foreigner. "When you play in as masterly a manner as he does," replied his lordship, "you shall not be overlooked." Carolan wagered with the musician, who is said to have been the celebrated Geminiani, that though he was a total stranger to Italian music, yet he would follow him in any piece he played; and that he himself would play a voluntary in which the Italian could not follow him. The proposal was acceded to; and Carolan was victorious.

But Carolan's muse was not always employed in extolling the great, in praising beauty, or in heightening the mirth of a convivial hour; it was sometimes devoted to the service of his God. He has frequently assisted with his voice and his harp at the elevation of the Host; and has composed several pieces of church music which are deemed excellent. "On Easter day," says a person who resided during his life-time in that part of the country, "I heard him play a piece of his sacred music at mass; he called it *Gloria in excelsis*; and he sung that hymn in Irish as he played. At the Lord's prayer he stopped, and after the priest ended it he sang again, and played a piece which he denominated the *Resurrection*. The enthusiasm of his devotion affected the whole congregation. This enthusiasm was very much increased by an idea he conceived, that he was inspired during the composition of these devotional pieces.

The period was now approaching when Carolan's feelings were to receive a violent shock. In the year 1733, the wife of his bosom was torn from him by the hand of death. This melancholy event threw a gloom over his mind, that was never after entirely dissipated. As soon as the trans-

ports of his grief had a little subsided, he composed a monody to her memory, now known by the name of *Mary M'Guire*.

Carolan did not long continue in this vale of sorrow after the death of his beloved wife. While on a visit at the house of a Mrs. M'Dermott, of Alderford, in the county of Roscommon, he died, in March 1738, in the 68th year of his age. He was interred in the parish church of Kilonan, in the diocese of Ardagh; but no one memorial exists of the spot in which he was laid. His grave was, and perhaps still is known to a few of his admirers, and some of the neighbouring peasants; and his skull was long distinguished from those of others which were promiscuously scattered through the churchyard, by a perforation in the forehead, through which a small piece of ribbon is drawn.

He had seven children by his wife, six daughters and one son. His son,

who had studied music, went to London, where he taught the Irish harp; before his departure, he published, in the year 1747, a collection of his father's music, omitting, through mercenary motives, some of his best pieces. It was re-published in Dublin, by John Lee, in 1780.

It is much to be wished that a complete collection of the musical compositions of this interesting character had been given to the public. Many, it is to be feared, are now irrecoverably lost. Many others are in danger of experiencing the same fate, unless preserved by the national spirit, which, after being so long curbed and repressed, is now appearing to revive. To this wish might be also added another, of having a more complete and authentic history of his life than can at present be collected from the imperfect, and sometimes contradictory accounts that have been handed down, mostly by oral tradition.

USEFUL INVENTIONS.

Receipt for Wyat's Plaster.

TAKE of coarse sharp sand, the particles of which are about one twentieth of an inch diameter, and another parcel whose particles are not more than one thirtieth of an inch. When each parcel is well cleansed from all impurities by washing, let it be dried either in the sun, or on a clean iron plate set in a convenient furnace, in a sand heat.

Let lime be chosen which heats most in slacking, and slakes the quickest when duly watered, which is the freshest made, and closest kept, which dissolves in distilled vinegar with the least effervescence, and leaves the smallest residue indissoluble, and in this residue the smallest quantity of gypsum or martial matter; let the lime thus chosen to the quantity of 14lb. be sifted through a very fine wire sieve, the finer it is the better; let the lime be slaked by plunging it in a butt filled with soft water, and raising it out quickly and suffering it to heat and fume, and repeating this plunging and raising alternately, and agitating the lime until it be made

to pass through the sieve into the water, and let the lime, which does not easily pass through the sieve, be rejected, and let fresh portions of the lime be thus used, until as many ounces of lime have passed through the sieve, as there are quarts of water in the butt. Let the water thus impregnated stand in a butt closely covered until it becomes clear, and through wooden cocks placed at different heights in the butt, let the clear liquor be drawn off as fast, and as low as the lime subsides, for use. This liquor, called the cementing liquor, is the better, the purer the water is from saline matter. Let fifty-six pounds of the aforesaid chosen lime be slaked by gradually sprinkling on it, and especially the unslaked pieces, the cementing liquor in a close clean place. Let the slaked part be immediately sifted through the fine wire sieve; let the lime which passes be used instantly or kept in air-tight vessels, and let the part of the lime which does not pass through the sieve be rejected. This finer, richer part of the lime which passes through the